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## SOCIAL CONTROL. IX.

### PERSONALITY.

#### I.

THE natural inequality of men, which explains so much to the sociologist, is nowhere more strikingly manifested than in the ascendancy which certain persons are able to gain over their fellows without reliance on the ordinary means of procuring obedience. The assumption that everybody acts egotistically until some form of control is exercised is undermined, not only by the existence of spontaneous sympathy, but also by the fact of voluntary subordination. Sympathy with fellows and deference to the born leader are the two primitive social facts which precede and antedate all the species of control I have been describing.

That at the appearance of certain exceptional men the impulse to obey is as natural and overpowering as that of the spaniel to nose the heels of a master, can be established by numerous citations.

Garibaldi "inspired among men of the most various temperaments love that nothing could shake, and devotion that fell little short of idolatry." "He enjoyed the worship and cast the spell of a legendary hero."

Cortez had "wonderful power over the discordant masses gathered under his banner."

Of Sam Houston it is said: "If he had been bound naked upon the back of a wild horse, like Mazeppa, the first tribe he came to would have chosen him prince."

Mirabeau "carries all before him;" has "a terrible gift of familiarity," "turns people round his thumb," "is possessed of a secret charm that . . . opens him the hearts of almost all people."

Said Vandamme of Napoleon: "That devil of a man exercises a fascination on me that I cannot explain to myself, and in such a degree that, though I fear neither God nor devil, when I am in his presence I am ready to tremble like a child, and he could make me go through the eye of a needle to throw myself into the fire." Augereau is stupefied at their first meeting, and confesses afterward that this "little devil of a general" has inspired him with awe.

## II.

What are the conditions and causes of this personal ascendancy?

Undoubtedly a condition of excitement favors it. The battle field, with its exalted mood, has always been the scene of the most splendid triumphs of personal influence. Hence great captains—Hannibal, Cæsar, Clive, Bonaparte, Ney, Stonewall Jackson, Lee, Skobelev—have shown a rare capacity to win their men's devotion. Cavalry battle, especially, with its intoxication of rapid movement and thrill of personal encounter, gives to leaders like Prince Rupert, Murat, Schill, Sheridan, or Phil Kearney an almost superhuman value. Men in masses—armies, mobs, audiences—succumb more readily than the same men taken singly, because of the herd thrill. Hence, perhaps, the otherwise strange connection between personal ascendancy and public speaking. Quite apart from the persuasiveness of his utterances, the orator enjoys two favorable conditions of personal fascination—a crowd and continuous attention. Times of alarm and stress give golden opportunities to the born leader. We have but to recall Peter the Hermit, Joan of Arc, Danton, Lamartine, Garibaldi, and Lincoln.

The causes of hero worship are to be sought in the hero. The serene brow of Sakya Muni, the burning black eyes of Mahomet, the stature of Charlemagne or Peter the Great, the purity that shone upon the face of the Maid, the "terrific ugliness" of Mirabeau, the piercing eye of Napoleon, the leonine face of Webster, the glance "like the glint from broken steel"

of Walker the Filibuster, the romantic aspect of Garibaldi, the yellow curls of Custer—these witness to the value of physical traits. Perfection of physique certainly subdues. The old Teutons loved to recognize in their leader the supreme manly beauty of the true god-descended Amal or Balth. Manner, as already shown, apropos of ceremony,<sup>1</sup> is perhaps the key to pure personal fascination. The born master is he who is able to radiate his desires into a passive circle disposed to prompt imitation. Manner serves him because of its value in suggesting belief and confidence in himself. Primitive chieftains, a sachem like Logan, a sheik like Abd-el-Kader, are renowned for their superb dignity. For winning, rather than merely impressing, the peculiar cordiality of a “magnetic” Clay or Blaine is potent. Even tricks have their effect, and we must not ignore the histrionism of Houston, Jackson, or Napoleon.

Of mental qualities strength of will is of course the invariable prerequisite; but faith in one's self and imagination are the real architects of vast personal authority. Those who win multitudes for some great enterprise—a crusade, a conquest, or a canal—are invariably great promisers. A royal imagination, coupled perhaps with the ecstatic temperament and equipped with eloquence, enables them to bedazzle their followers with prospects, and a tremorless faith in themselves and their cause inspires confidence of success. Such men were Mahomet, Cortez, Pontiac, Madame Krüdener, De Lesseps, El Mahdi. Courage and persistence avail. The man who bears up when others despair, is cool when they are excited—a Luther or a Brigham Young—acquires in time large influence. The most stupendous enterprise of all time is the campaign against the unsocial self, and in this the master qualities of a leader are generosity and love. Disinterested paladins of justice like Kosuth or Chinese Gordon, great lovers like Saint Francis or Livingstone, surpass all other influences in the power to call forth supreme personal devotion.

Such are the elements of natural prestige. But a man over-

<sup>1</sup> See the seventh paper of this series.

tops others, not only by virtue of his stature, but as well by whatever he stands on. The hero may be lifted up by his skill at arms, his sagacity, his hoard of experience, his talents, gifts, accomplishments. Outside the heroes of religion, the charm of pure personality is rarely seen in history, so much is it confused with a boundless admiration extorted by distinction and achievement. Who can separate Ulysses from his craft, Richard from his exploits, Saladin from his skill, Johnson from his intellect, Bismarck from his success, and say how much is due to the personality itself?

Moreover, when we pass from the heroes to the numerous captains and governors of men we must take account of still other factors. Society is ever arranging itself in ranks with reference to race, caste, family, wealth, condition, and so forth. To the Hindu the European, to the Sûdra the Brahmin, to the plebeian the patrician, to the tenant the lord, to the soldier the officer is invested with elements of prestige that have awe-inspiring, obedience-compelling power.

### III.

Let us observe the rôle of personality in the history of control.

We find that in primitive societies headship, ere it becomes the sacred right of a family, is held as a matter of course by the exceptional man. Among the Khonds "the spirit of attachment to persons rather than to institutions is very powerfully developed." "The patriarch depends for obedience to his decisions entirely upon his personal influence." The homage of the Ostiaks to their chief "is voluntary and founded on personal respect." The Damaras "court slavery," and "follow a master as spaniels would." "Their hero worship is directed to people who have wit and strength enough to ill-use them." Among the Bedouins the sheik must "maintain his influence by the means which wealth, talents, courage, and noble birth afford." "The tribes never obey their sheiks unless for personal considerations." Among the Franks "the personal element is, speaking generally,

the predominant element in all the relations . . . of public life."

From a study of Asiatic and African races one truth stands out clear. *In natural societies personal control is all the positive control there is.* But the true nature of this voluntary subordination must be noted. The sentiments that underlie early allegiance are not love and devotion, but fear, trust, and admiration. Vague fear that comes to be inspired by an Attila, a Tecumtha, or a Chaka; trust, inspired as in the case of Hastings, by his "constant successes and the manner in which he extricated himself from every difficulty;" admiration for preëminence in those qualities that insure success in an enterprise, such as superior cunning, sagacity, knowledge, athletic skill, strength, courage, or resource. But all this amounts merely to recognition of the able-man. Early man is too egotistic and practical to be swept from his moorings by any sentiment of personal devotion. There is no hint of idolatry for one of his kind.

Nothing can carry men beyond this hard-headed cult of efficiency but a dash of idealism. With noble idealizing races, like the Arabs or the Germans, we see almost from the first something chivalric in the relations of follower to leader. The chieftain of Tacitus' Germans was the Able-man to those who chose him in assembly, but to the band of comrades—the *comitatus*—that voluntarily clave to him he was the object of all love and fidelity. We get something better than a myrmidon allegiance contingent on success as soon as we get *disinterested* admiration, *i. e.*, admiration for qualities that are not serviceable to the follower. When men begin to admire and obey him who is most conspicuous for eloquence or truth speaking, or justice or magnanimity, we get a loyalty that does not turn on the prospect of success. Such an attitude implies that in the course of social life certain values have come to prevail, certain ideals have infected the mass—in other words, moral civilization has begun.

This disinterested appreciation of personality is but a phase of a larger movement. As a social environment becomes more

rich and varied we can distinguish a development of man's feelings, judgments, and choices which may be termed *the evolution of personality*. The law of it is that *men come to feel toward more things and to feel toward them more strongly*. The world's gray is broken up into lights and shadows. For instance, during a definite period we can see the Greek race pass from indifference to the strongest feelings of admiration or dislike for a work of art. During the Middle Ages we can observe the dawn of that sense of the charm of woman that was to give birth to romantic love. With the Renaissance the feeling for natural beauty develops prodigiously, while in about a century and a half we have seen the rise of a passion for absolute self-direction. Now in the midst of these developments we can discover *a growing sense of the charm of persons*.

So far as this means keener feelings about personal beauty or ugliness it is a chapter in the development of taste. But there is something more than æsthetic in the growing emphasis of attitude toward traits of character. In the fourth century before Christ men are enamored of courage, justice, magnanimity. In the fourth century after, it is mercy, meekness, unselfishness, that are prized. With the rise of chivalry, courage, courtesy, and purity become supreme values. In fact, whenever a people is formed certain character values are sure to be throned among the gods and become the goal of individual endeavor. The possessor of these is not followed simply as a promiser of success; he is adored as a hero.

Besides this development of personality there is a certain social development that favors hero worship. The military organization of an invading host, coupled with the stratification of races through conquest, ranges men, as it were, on social terraces. Those kingly men who stand high up on the social pyramid are invested with an additional prestige by their exceptional birth, wealth, education, or privilege. The hearty recognition of their superiority, and the frank acknowledgment of inferiority by common men, smooths the way to a costless ascendancy of the born leaders from the higher class, and thus

vastly simplifies the problem of government. But this is on condition that the masses consent to be measured by the scale of the masters. Where, as with the captive Jews, or the Christian races of the Turkish Empire, the governed feels itself a subject population, and spurning the master values that brand it with inferiority clings to its own table of excellences, the ruling class will not be able to ease itself in the saddle. But if the subjugated accept the scale of values of their rulers, and so *feel* their own inferiority, the relations of coercion and submission pass over into the domination and fealty of feudal society. Here where fidelity is a universal countersign with which men meet the challenge of conscience, personal control bulks for more than it ever has before or since.

But a later evolution of personality shatters the foundations of this control. Certain theological ideas accepted by the Occident taught each man, even the undermost, to feel himself an immortal soul of a worth quite independent of his political or social weight. In the eye of Deity men stood not on rising terraces, but on a common footing. Acquired prestige, therefore, shrunk, and personality lost the brilliant chromosphere lent it by social distinction. Printing, gunpowder, trade and new land conspiring to improve the social situation of the lower classes, these theological ideas, revamped by metaphysics, were used as a lever to lift the lowly to a realizing sense of the possibilities before them. The common man was declared first custodian of an inviolable conscience, and later proprietor of a bundle of "rights." Equality was proclaimed a fact, liberty a birthright, and fraternity an ideal. Thus Protestantism, Puritanism, and democracy have worked together to deepen the individual's sense of his own worth, and to indispose him to unconditional subordination to another.

Impressed by the collapse of social order in revolutionary France, and the signs that western societies were sliding toward the abyss of anarchy, Carlyle, with his gospel of hero worship, sought to revive the sway of personality by inspiring anew reverence and admiration for the exceptional man. For the decay



of control by constituted organs he saw no remedy save in the return to personal ascendencies and personal fealty.<sup>1</sup> Salvation lay in brushing aside dogmas of "equality" and "rights," and fostering that humble frame of mind that bows gladly to the natural superior. To this end Carlyle made of history a drama,<sup>2</sup> exalted the rôle of great men,<sup>3</sup> belittled that of the people, over-emphasized loyalty as a principle of order,<sup>4</sup> and sought to trace back all existing ranks, dignities, and titles to primitive personal ascendencies.<sup>5</sup> In the flinging off of authority led by Luther and ending with Rousseau Carlyle saw but the casting aside of "shams," "false heroes," and "make-believe authorities," "the painful but indispensable first preparative for true sovereignty getting place among us."

It is now clear to us that Carlyle missed the drift of the age. He did not see that a new type of control was made possible by the cult of the individual. When he wrote the moral method of democracy, namely, the guidance of men by ideals to which they are held by pride and self-respect, had not yet shown its efficacy. Not on the continent, but in America, where it is a lineal descendant of Puritanism, do we see democracy providing its own antidote. Here the steadiness of a social control through self-masterhood lessens both the mood and the need of hero worship. Rare spirits, no doubt, will never be wholly defrauded of their birthright over the souls of lesser men. In emergencies, in troublous times, in new countries, and on frontiers, in the contact of higher races with lower the Strong Man still comes to

<sup>1</sup> Hero worship is "a fact inexpressibly precious; the most solacing fact one sees in the world at present. There is an everlasting hope in it for the management of the world."

<sup>2</sup> "The history of the world is the biography of great men."

<sup>3</sup> "They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modelers, patterns, and, in a sense, creators of whatsoever the mass of men contrived to do or attain."

<sup>4</sup> "Society is founded on hero worship." "Hero worship never dies nor can die." "Loyalty, the life breath of all society." "Admiration for one higher than himself is to this hour and at all hours the vivifying influence in man's life."

<sup>5</sup> "All dignities of rank on which human association rests are what we may call a *heroarchy*." "Society everywhere is some representation . . . of a graduated worship of heroes."

his own. Moreover, if this experiment of exaggerating the common man's sense of his own worth ends, not in a proud loyalty to ideals of duty, but in an overweening conceit, unleashing a baleful egotism, the parent of misrule and lawlessness, we shall, no doubt, get the Man-on-Horseback. But not until society finds control by means of its impersonal institutions—its laws, faiths, disciplines, ideals, dogmas, and values—no longer adequate will it fall back upon personal ascendencies and strive to patch together a social order out of the order every strong personality creates about him.

#### IV.

How now is society able to avail itself of the control enjoyed by persons?

It is, of course, possible that such a control may in no wise comport with the ends or welfare of society. There is nothing to hinder an Alcibiades, a Napoleon, or a Burr from exploiting his fascination wholly for his private benefit, and not at all on behalf of his followers or of the group. In fact, to say nothing of the historical instances of hecatombs of victims, self-immolated to the greed or ambition of one man, we have but to look about us to see men—worldly clerics, bosses, demagogues, and adventurers—assisting themselves to the top by their magnetic power, coolly using their charm to disarm rivals or win allies as their interest may require. It is only because society soon intervenes to check the growing ascendancy of such dangerous egoists that the leaders who are permitted to attain historical dimensions usually possess some social aim and significance.

There is, nevertheless, a guarantee furnished by the very nature of the born captain. The qualities—will, imagination, courage, preëminence—which give him lasting ascendancy imply largeness of caliber. They go with wide horizons, far-ranging vision, soaring ambition, and a passion for large objects, great causes, and enterprises of pith and moment. Quite apart from any love of others or devotion to the group, a great man is liable to a noble enthusiasm for labors which do not issue and

terminate upon himself. Alongside of that little boat which he steers so carefully are millions of others of similar build and dimensions; none of them are worth much, and his own is not worth more. In vain will he provision it, decorate it, and shove ahead to get the first place; in vain will he repair it and handle it carefully; in a few years it leaks; sooner or later it sinks, and with it goes all the labor it has cost him.

He with eye to see the shortness of his course and the nearness of his fate will feel the pettiness of individual aims, and will be drawn toward those substantial and enduring communal objects, those corporate concerns and undertakings which affect vast numbers of men, and have an imposing secular history. Among the innumerable boats, so soon to sink, so easy to replace, there are great three-deckers, freighted with vast interests, and destined to remain afloat long after he and his boat have disappeared. Is it strange, then, that the exceptional man frequently devotes himself more willingly to steering, maneuvering, and advancing one of these ships than to managing his own frail bark?<sup>1</sup>

But if the man of influence still cleaves to a purely personal ambition, and if, moreover, society cannot overcome him with any of its long-range weapons of control—its faiths or its ideals—there are still other means of bringing him into line with social endeavor. Society is always contending with the brittleness of its regulative instruments. The helmsmen of the state, the archons of religion, the shapers of moral disciplines, the framers of ideals are painfully conscious of a certain impotence. Hence society, through its guides, courts the aid of dominating persons, hoping to use their influence to strengthen its own. This it does by making it to the interest of the man of light and leading to pull with it rather than against it, to dispose of his control to the wardens of the social order rather than to invest it on his own account.

The military service exemplifies this policy. Here we have a great body of fighters led by a small body of officers, organ-

<sup>1</sup> This illustration is adapted from TAINE'S *Modern Régime*, Vol. I, Bk. iv, chap. 1.

ized hierarchically and graded in respect to responsibilities, emoluments, and honors. All along this staircase, excepting perhaps a few steps at the very top reserved for the Shermans and Von Moltkes, promotion is very closely bound up with successful leadership. The officer who can animate his men to the greatest efforts, win them for the boldest enterprises, nerve them for the heaviest shocks, is deemed of highest value, and is advanced towards ever higher prizes. Such a service, therefore, establishes a perpetual market where personal ascendancy can be disposed of to the best advantage.

The state has always been another field for the profitable employment of natural mastership. The steady authority political organs can count on now is a rather recent thing. The time was when a success of government was very much bound up with the personal authority of those who officered the state. Not great administrators like Stephan or Cromer, nor yet great statesmen like Pitt or Cavour, welded the modern state out of the fragments of power provided by feudalism. This was in part the work of heroes, of kings and the ministers of kings, who eked out the scanty royal authority with their personal dominion. Through most of its history the state has been a hierarchy of places and prizes to go to those most able to make their wills prevail over those of other men.

Even in the rigid articulated mechanism of the "legal state" personal ascendancy is not yet a *quantité négligeable*. All the time considerable changes are taking place in the partition of power between government and citizen and in its distribution among the men who compose the government. Despite its statutory framework, an office bulges when filled by the man of command, shrinks when occupied by mediocrity. Recognizing as he must all these warping influences that make the real state so unlike the edifice of the theorist, it is still certain that the general will behind the political mechanism prevails more and more over the personalities that constitute its parts.

The church relies much more than the state upon manipulation of the feelings because it has no bailiffs or constables at its

beck and call. Denied power over the body, it must ply all the more skillfully those great instruments of "spiritual" ascendancy—religion, ideals, and personality. Of the last a perpetual capital is already provided in the person of the founder. In the Christian or the Buddhist church, if anywhere, is verified Emerson's saying that an institution is a lengthened shadow of one man. Moreover, through the church, society is beneficiary of the control exercised by a corps of inspired, consecrated, overmastering, uplifting persons whose influence it may accept but could under no circumstances buy. But social order can profit, not alone from a Ballington Booth or a Phillips Brooks, but can even make use of unconsecrated personalities. In the more centralized churches, just as in army and state, we have a hierarchy of places and prizes in which the principle of ascent is the power to sway men and a willingness to sway them in a certain direction. How often the self-seeker with "power and will to dominate" enlists in the ecclesiastical corps for the "heaven's incense," the "Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls, and English books" of a Bishop Blougram the *Life of Manning* gives us a hint. The democratic tendency to do away with steep gradations in the prizes of state and church is a sign that society, having opened up new sources of control, need no longer bid so desperately for personal influence.

On the whole I conclude that personal ascendancy will play no such rôle in the future as it has in the past. Unless humanity surrenders the idealistic basis upon which more and more the control of its members rests, personality will remain as now a valuable auxiliary to political and moral authority, but not the corner stone of social order. In our days the Carlylean "gospel of great men" leads chiefly to nothing better than the apotheosis of such pinchbeck heroes as Cecil Rhodes and "Doctor Jim."

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